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# Poindexter Is Silent On Computer Security

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Former national security adviser John M. Poindexter, a key figure in the Iran-contra affair, yesterday refused to answer congressional questions about his role in developing a controversial administration computer security policy.

Rear Adm. Poindexter, who invoked his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination when testifying on the Iran-contra situation before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in January, did so again yesterday at a House Government Operations subcommittee hearing.

Poindexter's refusal to testify overshadowed the Reagan administration's retreat on the issue of the hearing: How much control the government should have over unclassified information.

Frank C. Carlucci, the new national security adviser, said the administration has rescinded a restrictive 1986 order that Poindexter signed and was reviewing a 1984 National Security Directive signed by President Reagan that set up a new category of "sensitive, but not classified, information."

Business and scientific groups

have complained that the directives give the government too big a role in controlling access to data.

Kenneth de Graffenreid, who helped draft the 1984 directive when he was director for intelligence programs at the National Security Council, testified that National Security Decision Directive 145 was intended to protect U.S. government computers and communications links from being intercepted by hostile foreign powers such as the Soviet Union.

But Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.), chairman of the subcommittee on legislation and national security, said that the Reagan administration was acting like "Big Brother," and trying to control information on all computers around the country by its broad definition of sensitive information.

The subcommittee subpoenaed Poindexter to answer questions about the 1986 order that he signed.

Richard W. Beckler, Poindexter's attorney, attacked the subcommittee, saying it was "totally unprecedented" to subpoena a national security adviser, and questioned the wisdom of a White House decision not to claim "executive privilege" in order to block the testimony.

Beckler said that although the computer security subject of yes-

terday's hearing "may appear to some to be unrelated" to the ongoing Iran-contra investigations, he said "it would be extremely ill-advised for us to take any but the broadest view."

Beckler said his client had offered to submit a written statement to the subcommittee "to avoid the public spectacle of yet another congressional hearing during which our client would be forced to invoke his constitutional rights before a sea of cameras and microphones."

Brooks asked Poindexter four questions about the 1986 memo entitled "National Policy on Protection of Sensitive, but Unclassified, Information in Federal Government Telecommunications and Automated Information Systems."

Poindexter cited his Fifth Amendment privilege and refused to answer each time.

Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) challenged Beckler's statement that the subcommittee was playing to the media. He called Poindexter's use of the Fifth Amendment "a perversion of the spirit of the amendment" because the former White House adviser was being asked about policy, not the Iran-contra affair.

Brooks and other House members have introduced a bill to give the National Bureau of Standards, rather than the super-secret National Security Agency, the lead role in developing computer protection. Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige and Deputy Secretary of Defense William H. Taft IV testified that they would work with the Congress to seek a compromise.